

29) (original) The external computer device of claim 25, wherein said external computer device is a flash ram drive.

30) (cancelled)

31) (cancelled)

Remarks:

- 1) Claims 1-31 were originally filed. Claims 30-31 were withdrawn pursuant to the restriction requirement of the previous Office Action. Claims 1-29 stand rejected. Claims 1, 3, 5, 7, 13, 15, 19, 21, 22 and 25 are currently amended herein. Claims 2, 8, 14, 20 and 26-27 are cancelled herein. Claims 1, 3-7, 9-13, 15-19, 21-25, and 28-29 are pending.
- 2) In the Previous Office Action, Claims 1-29 are identified as being drawn to invention I, and claims 30-31 are identified as being drawn to invention II. Pursuant to the restriction requirement, Applicant has elected prosecution of claims 1-29 and withdraws claims 30-31 from examination with traverse, and without prejudice.
- 3) Two typographical errors are herein corrected in the specification. These changes do not add new matter to the specification.
- 4) Formal drawings are submitted herewithin, as required in the office action.
- 5) An Information Disclosure Statement is enclosed representing additional research done within the previous 90 days.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

In the Office Action claims 1-4, 6-14, 16-20, and 22-29 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over applicant admitted prior art in view of Ko, et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,231,361). Ko, et al. discloses a single conductor power connector for preventing short circuits and harmful incidents to people. In the first embodiment of the Ko patent it discloses a connector wherein the connector does not extend beyond its outer protective cover (Column 2, Lines 35-40). In the second embodiment, a connector which extends beyond the protective cover is proposed (Column 2, Lines 41-59).

Applicants respectfully submit that Ko is inappropriate for at least two reasons. First, one of ordinary skill in the art would not look to Ko for a method to protect a multi-conductor data connector, such as a USB connector, since Ko is drawn to a safety cover for a single conductor power connector. Ko is concerned with protecting the conductor from short circuits during handling and safety, not with physical protection of the connector from its environment. In fact, Ko envisions a system wherein the connector is never exposed (see Col. 2, lines 35-40). In contrast, there are no concerns of shorting the connector of the present invention because the device having the connector is generally un-powered until plugged in to a computer. Further, in several of the preferred embodiments of the present invention the cover is retracted before making the connector. Ko completely teaches away from such an embodiment.

Further, there is simply no motivation expressed in Ko for combining with the prior art disclosed by Applicants. Ko does not discuss multi-conductor embodiments and does not disclose use with small data connectors. Ko is not even readily adaptable for use with the present invention and the Office Action provides no guidance on how one could modify Ko to make his device workable with the prior art USB connector.

With regard to claim 1, there is a requirement that "when said cover is in said engaged position, said connector is exposed from said cover". This is contrary to the teaching of Ko, as discussed above,

or the second embodiment of Ko wherein the mating connector protects the conductor as the connectors are engaged.

While Applicants believe that Ko in view of the AAPA does not disclose the present invention, out of an abundance of caution, the limitations of claim 2 were added to claim 1, namely, limiting independent claim 1 to USB connectors (as well as the other independent claims). Ko simply does not suggest that his invention is usable with any connector even similar to a USB connector.

Similarly, claim 3 is limited to small data connectors, i.e. an USB connector, and absolute continuous covering of the conductor is not necessary. Ko is not applicable to the invention of claim 3 for the same reasons that is not relevant to the invention of claim 1.

Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1 and 3 are therefore in condition for allowance. Claims 4-6 depend from claim 1 and, at least for the reasons stated with regard to claim 1, are likewise in condition for allowance. In addition, claim 9 depends from claim 3 and, at least for the reasons stated with regard to claim 3, are likewise in condition for allowance. Reexamination and allowance of claims 1, 3, 4-6, and 9 are respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claim 7 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the AAPA in view of Ko. However, neither the AAPA nor Ko disclose an integrated front barrier protector. In the Office Action, claims 5, 15, and 21 are likewise rejected as being unpatentable over the AAPA in view of Ko and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,760,486, issued to Rifkin, et al. In the Office Action Rifkin, et al. is said to disclose a front barrier protector. While Applicants respectfully submits that there is no motivation to combine Ko with the AAPA, as discussed hereinabove, none of the prior art of record, including Rifkin, discloses an integrated front barrier protector. In fact, the front barrier cover of Rifkin creates a piece which is loose when the connector is mated, a condition which is eliminated by the present invention and, in fact, an object of the present invention. Claims 5, 15, and 21 have been amended to require the front barrier protector to be integrated with the housing, as detailed in the application.

Accordingly, Applicants submit claim 7 is thus in condition for allowance. Claims 10-12 depend from claim 7 and, at least for the reasons stated with regard to claim 7, are likewise in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance of claims 7 and 10-12 are respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claim 13 is also rejected as being unpatentable over the AAPA in view of Ko. Applicants submit that there is no motivation to combine Ko with the AAPA, as discussed above. Further, none of the prior art of record discloses a USB connector having an inner sleeve which comprises a connector cover, as required by claim 13.

Applicants submit that claim 13 is thus in condition for allowance. Claims 15-18 depend from claim 13 and, at least for the reasons stated with regard to claim 13, are likewise in condition for allowance. Reexamination and allowance of claims 13, and 15-18 are respectfully requested.

While claim 15 is otherwise in condition for allowance, Applicants would like to point out that claim 15, as amended, also requires an integrated front barrier protector, which, as discussed with regard to claim 7, is not found in the prior art of record.

In the Office Action, claim 19 is rejected as being unpatentable over the AAPA in view of Ko. As discussed with regard to claim 1 hereinabove, there simply is no motivation to combine Ko with the AAPA. Applicants submit that claim 19 is thus in condition for allowance. Claims 21, 22 as amended, 23-24 depend from claim 19 and, at least for the reasons stated with regard to claims 1 and 19, are likewise in condition for allowance.

While claim 21 is otherwise in condition for allowance, Applicants would like to point out that claim 21, as amended, also requires an integrated front barrier protector, which, as discussed with regard to claims 7 and 15, is not found in the prior art of record.

Reexamination and allowance of claims 19-24 are respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claim 25 is rejected as being unpatentable over the AAPA in view of Ko. Claim 25 is drawn to a USB connector in a long-throw configuration. As discussed in the specification, the long-throw configuration allows use of a USB device in an area in which there would otherwise not be enough clearance. Neither the AAPA nor Ko disclose a long-throw configuration.

Applicants submit that claim 25 is thus in condition for allowance. Claims 28 and 29 depend from claim 25 and, at least for the reasons stated with regard to claim 25, are likewise in condition for allowance. Reexamination and allowance of claims 25, 28, and 29 are respectfully requested.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

Claims 5, 15, and 21 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over applicant admitted prior art in view of Ko, et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,231,361), as applied to claim 1, and further in view of Rifkin et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 3,760,486). For all of the reasons explained previously, Ko, et al. with respect to the invention disclosed and claimed herein. Thus, rejection under § 103(a) is improper and should be withdrawn.

* * *

In view of the foregoing, the all of the rejections offered by the Examiner as part of the above-identified Office Action are now moot. Thus, these rejections should be now be withdrawn and the application allowed to issue.

* * *

In view of the above, it is submitted that the claims as-modified are in condition for allowance. Early and favorable action is, therefore, earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



Ken S. Fisher
Reg. No. 33,036
Date: March 25, 2004

5521 Cleon Ave.
N. Hollywood, CA 91601
tel - (818) 752-2626
fax - (818) 752-6316